

A little over one hundred fifty years ago, the private letters of a father to his son were ruthlessly published, thus exposing to the public eye the undisguised nature of the writer and the continuous paternal advice to the boy for thirty-one years. Curiously enough, the book is valued as a guide in many ways to the youth today and, from the literary point of view, as one of the best epistolary productions. This group of letters, Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son, is usually present in a well chosen library and is not only highly praised but also greatly condemned. It is a product partly of the age in which Lord Chesterfield lived and of the ideals he formed by reading and observation. A study of the contents of these letters and a comparison between them and the sixteenth century "handbooks" or guides for courtiers furnish the material for this treatise. These books viewed from the twentieth century when the characteristics and the tendencies of both periods may be seen in perspective, have shown many similarities and differences although a rather consistent corpus of rules for the training of gentlemen seems to have been common to all.

Chesterfield's Letters to his Son is compared with the conduct books of the sixteenth century. By conduct book is meant a